



Leaving No One Behind in the Pacific: The Role of Migration



IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

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Cover photo: Fishers in a traditional wooden canoe at the edge of the Roviana lagoon in the Solomon Islands (photo credit: Tom Vierus / Pacific Media House)

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Introduction

This policy paper explores approaches for taking into account migration in the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) principle in development cooperation and for incorporating the LNOB principle in migration-related policies and programmes in the Pacific.

The document synthesizes the findings from a broad literature review along with data from semi-structured interviews with regional representatives from UN agencies, Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific (CROP) representatives and academia. After outlining the relationship between sustainable development and migration, the paper explores the LNOB principle. It then presents an initial analysis of who is at risk of being left behind in the Pacific, the role of migration as a potential risk factor due to gaps and inequalities in governance frameworks, and the ways migration can be leveraged to improve sustainable development outcomes. It is acknowledged migration can be complex and non-linear and the ways in which migration and development intersect with each other can be highly variable and context specific. Concern for those who are furthest behind due to intersecting disadvantage is paramount. The paper provides a set of recommendations on operational and policy guidance in better integrating the LNOB principle within sustainable development processes in the Pacific.

The 2030 Agenda and migration

2

“Sustainable development cannot be achieved without due consideration of migration.”¹

2.1 Sustainable development in the global context

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is the global community's shared blueprint for achieving peace and prosperity for people and the planet.² The 2030 Agenda is guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including full respect for international law. Corollary reforms to the UN Development System,³ including through the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF),⁴ aim to maximise the impacts of UN Country Teams (CTs)' renewed inclusive, people-centered, coordinated and joint programming. Moreover, in line with the New Way of Working, the UNSDCF addresses collaboration between the humanitarian-development-peace nexus (HDPN) and the added value of development approaches and actors in tackling crisis drivers and recurrent risks.

2.2 Migration and sustainable development

In announcing the SDGs and their associated targets, UN Member States committed “to cooperate internationally to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration involving full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants regardless of migration status, of refugees and of displaced persons.”⁵ The 2030 Agenda target most clearly related to migration is target 10.7.⁶ However, migration and migrants are relevant to the successful implementation of all of the SDGs, and the successful implementation of the SDGs is relevant to the full realisation of migrants' rights.⁷ The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)⁸, which was developed in close alignment with SDG target 10.7, also provides a vital policy framework from which to contribute to sustainable development outcomes through improved coordination and governance on international migration.

In line with its *Global Strategic Vision*,⁹ IOM's *Institutional Strategy on Migration and Sustainable Development* reinforces the organisation's commitment to the realisation of the 2030 Agenda. It outlines its approach to supporting Member States to implement the SDGs, and commits the organization to leading global discussions on migration and sustainable development.¹⁰ It identifies three outcomes that jointly enable societies to maximize the potential of migration to achieve sustainable development, namely that human mobility is increasingly a choice; migrants and their families are empowered as development actors; and migration is increasingly well governed.¹¹

1 IOM, *Migration and the 2030 Agenda: A Guide for Practitioners* (Geneva, 2018). Available from [Migration and the 2030 Agenda: A Guide for Practitioners](#).

2 UN, *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015). Available from [Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

3 The *UN Development System Reform* was mandated by the General Assembly (A/RES/72/279) in 2018 in response to Secretary-General António Guterres' call to “reposition the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda.” The *New Way of Working* is presented in the Secretary-General's *Report* for the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit including the associated *Agenda for Humanity* (A/70/709).

4 UN SDG, *Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework: Internal Guidance* (2019). Available from [UN-Cooperation-Framework-Internal-Guidance-Final-June-2019_1.pdf](#).

5 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, Paragraph 29 (2015). Available from [Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development | Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(un.org\)](#).

6 Namely, Target 10.7 Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.

7 Overseas Development Institute, *Migration and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (London, 2018). Available from [Migration and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

8 UN, *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* (2019). Available from [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#).

9 IOM, *Strategic Vision: Setting a Course for IOM* (Geneva, 2019). Available from [Strategic Vision: Setting a course for IOM](#).

10 IOM, *IOM Institutional Strategy on Migration and Sustainable Development* (Geneva, 2020). Available from [Institutional Strategy on Migration and Sustainable Development](#).

11 These sit alongside the cross-cutting issues of inequalities, environment and climate change, and gender.

Applying a human rights-based approach

IOM's approach to implementing the principle to leave no one behind in the Pacific will be integrated with the UNSDCF and with IOM's global, regional and cross-cutting strategic frameworks. IOM in the Pacific will systematically apply human rights-based,¹² non-discriminatory/inclusive, and participatory approaches in the prioritisation, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of relevant policies and programmes. It will seek to ensure that migration-related policies and programmes are perceived, designed, and implemented as an integral part of the 2030 Agenda, and as an essential contributing factor to leaving no one behind in the region. It will consider the other UNSDCF guiding principles of gender equality and women's empowerment, resilience, sustainability, and accountability. Further, when requested, IOM will assist governments in the follow up to UN human rights recommendations, and support steps towards the ratification of international human rights instruments. It will continue to strengthen the region's understanding of human rights in the context of migration, and reinforce the value of the GCM as a commitment founded in human rights.

IOM Pacific Strategy (2022–2026)

Over the next five years, IOM operations, policy and programming in the Pacific will be informed directly by the IOM Pacific Strategy. This document was produced as a result of highly consultative discussions among relevant stakeholders in the Pacific region and has an overall goal to contribute towards enhanced resilience, governance and sustainable development in the context of human mobility in the Blue Pacific. In consultation with partners, IOM has identified three inter-connected areas for cooperation and promotes cross-cutting approaches across these areas which reflect IOM's analysis of the current state of migration in the Pacific and the organizational aim to address related opportunities and challenges. The pillars are:



1 Resilience to climate change and disaster related human mobility



2 Labour mobility and human development



3 Governance for border management and migrant protection

These inter-related and mutually reinforcing priorities are based on the principle of leaving no-one behind, emphasize social inclusion and are supported by cross-cutting programming approaches focused on COVID-19, gender, disability and social inclusion, localization and research, data and evidence.

¹² A Human Rights Based Approach consists in using the international human rights framework and outcomes of the human rights mechanisms as authoritative legislative, policy and programming guidance and tools. These mechanisms include, among others, the treaty bodies, the Human Rights Council and its Universal Periodic Review and special procedures. It also takes into account non-legally binding global commitments on human rights (UN declarations and plans of action) as well as regional and national human rights frameworks.

Leave No One Behind: A foundational principle of the 2030 Agenda

3

“As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind. Recognizing that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, we wish to see the Goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. And we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first.”¹³

‘Leave No One Behind’ is a value, a principle, and a specific pledge within the 2030 Agenda. It is crucial for achieving the ultimate goal which is “to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want, and to heal and secure our planet.”¹⁴ Supported by a human rights-based approach, and along with gender equality and women’s empowerment, leaving no one behind can “enable the SDGs to be truly transformative.”¹⁵ According to the UN Chief Executives Board, it is at the heart of the UN system’s efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda.¹⁶ It is one of six guiding principles for the UNSDCF,¹⁷ and one of five core responsibilities in the Agenda for Humanity.¹⁸

3.1 What does it mean to ‘Leave No One Behind’?

As elaborated in the UN Shared Framework for Action, the concept of leaving no one behind integrates the core elements of equality, non-discrimination and equity, and applies these to both horizontal and vertical inequalities.¹⁹ People get left behind when they lack the freedom, choices and opportunities to participate in, and benefit from, development progress. Everyone who lives in extreme poverty is considered to have been ‘left behind,’ as they are those who endure discrimination, significant disadvantages or deprivations when compared with others within their society. While the concept can be applied to individual circumstances, groups of people (including regions, countries, communities or those with a shared identity) may collectively face levels of disadvantage that leave them behind.

Importantly, the call to leave no one behind is founded in the principle of non-discrimination. Illicit grounds of direct or indirect discrimination include those based on race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability, age, nationality, sexual orientation and gender identity, economic and social situation, or other statuses. Non-discrimination is grounded in the international human rights framework which guarantees equality in dignity and rights, and the right to non-discrimination in the enjoyment of all human rights – including the right to benefit from development and the right to free, informed, and meaningful participation in the decision-making processes that affect ones’ life. It represents a human rights-based operational pre-requisite for leaving no one behind and adopting participatory processes in all stages of development initiatives.

13 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, Paragraph 4 (2015). Available from [Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development | Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(un.org\)](#).

14 The six principles expand upon the three values of leaving no one behind, gender equality and women’s empowerment, and a human rights-based approach with the additional concepts of resilience, sustainability and accountability. (United Nations, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, (2015). Available from [Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development | Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(un.org\)](#).

15 UN Sustainable Development Group, *Universal Values* (2021) Available from [UNSDG | 2030 Agenda - Universal Values](#).

16 UN Chief Executives Board, *Leaving No One Behind: Equality and Non-Discrimination at the Heart of Sustainable Development* (New York, 2017). Available from [Leaving No One Behind: Equality and Non-Discrimination at the Heart of Sustainable Development: The United Nations System Shared Framework for Action](#).

17 UN SDG, *Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework: Internal Guidance* p. 10 (2019). Available from [UN-Cooperation-Framework-Internal-Guidance-Final-June-2019_1.pdf](#).

18 “Honouring our commitment to leave no one behind requires reaching everyone in situations of conflict, disaster, vulnerability and risk.” United Nations, *Agenda for Humanity*, p. 7 (2016). Available from [Agenda for Humanity | Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(un.org\)](#).

19 UN Chief Executives Board, *Leaving No One Behind: Equality and Non-Discrimination at the Heart of Sustainable Development*, p. 3 (New York, 2017). Available from [Leaving No One Behind: Equality and Non-Discrimination at the Heart of Sustainable Development: The United Nations System Shared Framework for Action](#).

★ Recommendation 1

Ensuring meaningful participation of migrants

Migration policies and programmes should work to promote participation and inclusion of migrants, and people affected by migration. This should include appropriate consultation mechanisms that enable migrants to participate in a meaningful way. IOM will engage in joint initiatives with UN entities in including migrants' perspectives in development cooperation consultation processes including in relation to the SDGs. IOM will work to ensure participation by the populations who fall under its mandate, including people who have experienced various forms of migration, as well as those impacted by the migration of others, including dependents.

3.2 Who is the 'furthest behind': The importance of intersectionality

People who are in situations in which they experience exclusion on intersecting grounds of discrimination are at the greatest risk of being left behind, and most likely to be the furthest behind. Intersecting inequalities can have a compounding effect, making it more difficult to move out of a situation of poverty and deprivation. In one study of 16 countries, women and girls in rural areas born to poor families and who belong to a minority ethnic group were the most likely to be left behind.²⁰ In this regard, the Multidimensional Poverty Index is a useful tool for examining deprivations across the areas of health, education, and standard of living. It complements the standard definition of poverty (\$1.90 a day) by showing the nature and extent of overlapping deprivations for each person.²¹

Migrants may experience discrimination and disadvantage because of their migration status, but also as a result of personal characteristics such as their gender, sexual orientation, religious or cultural identity, disability, citizenship status and geographic location. Localized assessments are needed to understand the ways a person's migration situation can intersect with other risks factors in local structures of inequality or discrimination.²²

3.3 What tools are available for operationalizing the Leave No One Behind principle?

The UN Sustainable Development Group has outlined a set of approaches for operationalizing the human rights principles of the 2030 Agenda.²³ In relation to leaving no one behind, policy approaches include: putting inequalities and non-discrimination at the heart of efforts to implement the SDGs; starting by identifying inequalities and discrimination; addressing gender inequalities as a priority; addressing the causes of displacement and migration; developing new partnerships; and consistently applying a human-rights based approach. The guidance on operations includes: analysis of the specific groups which have been left behind; multi-stakeholder engagement to fill knowledge gaps; ensuring national SDG strategies disaggregate data so that they cover all prohibited grounds of discrimination; creating policy coherence by using existing tools to measure inequalities; and including an analysis of intersectional discrimination in monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

Draft interim guidelines to operationalize the LNOB principle have been produced for UNCTs'.²⁴ As shown in these guidelines, UN entities are accountable for integrating the LNOB principle at every stage of their development policies and programming processes, and for demonstrating their results in reaching the furthest behind first. The guidelines underline the importance of ensuring the meaningful participation of communities and people who have been left

20 Lenhardt and Samman, *In quest of inclusive progress: Exploring intersecting inequalities in human development* (London, 2015).

21 UNDP and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHDI), *Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2020* (Geneva, 2020). Available from [Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2020: Charting Pathways out of Multidimensional Poverty: Achieving the SDGs](#).

22 Such an assessment could be based on specific rights, grounds of discrimination, groups, or vulnerable situations as identified in the international human rights instruments and by their associated mechanisms. (OHCHR and Global Migration Group, *Principles and Guidelines, supported by practical guidance, on the human rights protection of migrants in vulnerable situations* (Geneva, n.d.) Available from [Principles and Guidelines, Supported by Practical Guidance, on the Human Rights Protection of Migrants in Vulnerable Situations](#)).

23 UNSDG Human Rights Working Group, *Policy and Operational Support for UNCTs on Human Rights in SDG Implementation* (2016). Available from [Policy Operational Support to UNCTs on Human Rights in SDG Implementation](#).

24 UN Sustainable Development Group, *Leaving No One Behind: A UNSDG Operational Guide for UN Country Teams* (April 2019). Available from [LNOB Operational Guide \(Interim Draft\)](#).

behind in these processes,²⁵ and put forward the case for joint planning across the development-humanitarian nexus.²⁶ The guidelines incorporate a framework for identifying who has been ‘left behind’ and who is ‘furthest behind’ in any society.²⁷ This framework outlines five domains that fuel exclusionary processes: discrimination (on the basis of assumed or ascribed identity or status), geography (on the basis of location, including environmental degradation, transport and technology factors), governance (including laws, policies, institutions and participation), socio-economic status, and shocks and fragility (including conflicts, and climate and environment related).²⁸ It emphasizes that it is when people stand at the intersection of those factors that they are the most at risk to experience multiple forms of exclusion that prevent them from fully benefiting from development progress, and thus to be left, or even pushed further behind. Alongside the cross-cutting approach on meaningful participation, the guide proposes five steps for UN Country Teams when operationalizing the Leave No One Behind principle: 1) Who is left behind? Gathering the evidence; 2) Why? Prioritization and analysis; 3) What should be done? 4) How to measure and monitor progress; and 5) How to advance accountability.

The Leave No One Behind Database

A key resource for determining who is being left behind in the Asia Pacific region is the Leave No One Behind Database by UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). This web portal includes tools to strengthen the capacity of policymakers to identify the furthest behind and to design policies that reduce multiple dimensions of inequality. It analyses the intersecting characteristics that produce inequality for a set of outcomes. While only three countries in the Pacific are currently included, this number will double by the end of 2021.

25 UN Sustainable Development Group, *Leaving No One Behind: A UNSDG Operational Guide for UN Country Teams*, p. 50-51 (April 2019). Available from LNOB Operational Guide (Interim Draft).

26 UN Sustainable Development Group, *Leaving No One Behind: A UNSDG Operational Guide for UN Country Teams*, p. 65-66 (April 2019). Available from LNOB Operational Guide (Interim Draft).

27 UNDP, *What does it mean to Leave No One Behind?* (2018). Available from What does it mean to Leave No one Behind? A UNDP Discussion paper and Framework for Implementation.

28 UN Sustainable Development Group, *Leaving No One Behind: A UNSDG Operational Guide for UN Country Teams*, p. 11-15 (April 2019). Available from LNOB Operational Guide (Interim Draft).

29 IOM, *IOM Institutional Strategy on Migration and Sustainable Development*, p. 10 (Geneva, 2020). Available from Institutional Strategy on Migration and Sustainable Development.

The dual roles of migration and its governance for leaving no one behind

4

Migration is a complex socio-political process, and thus too is the relationship between migration, sustainable development, and the 2030 Agenda's call to leave no one behind.

In the absence of migration governance structures and inclusive policy mechanisms that consider migrants' needs, migration can expose people to risks that cause or exacerbate marginalisation and extreme poverty. At the same time, with support of good and well-executed migration governance, migration can enable people to access opportunities for human development and allow them to contribute to sustainable development outcomes. The role of migration governance speaks to different aspects of the operationalization of the principle to leave no one behind: migration status is a factor to consider when determining who is being left behind, while migration is a tool that can be used to tackle the inequalities that leave people behind.

4.1 In what ways can the lack of migration governance increase risks of being left behind?

There are certain risks and vulnerabilities that are particular to migration, and if government policies do not consider them, *this can increase the risk of migrants being left behind*.²⁹ Broadly, these risks are associated with stages of the migration process including: the drivers of human mobility; legal and/or migration statuses;³⁰ levels of discrimination or xenophobia in communities of transit and destination; and the challenges of return and reintegration.³¹ In the *Handbook for Migrants vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse*³², IOM has developed a model to identify the determinants of migrant vulnerability and protective factors at the individual, household/family, community and structural levels. It proposes, accordingly, a programmatic approach to protect and assist migrants vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse to be applied at different stages of migration (before, during and after) as well as in countries of origin, transit and destination. Within the model, IOM underlines the centrality of the interaction of multiple factors for identifying the overall risks to vulnerability,³³ level of resilience, and appropriate protective and assistance systems and measures, as illustrated by the following example:

*Members of a community displaced by a natural disaster may face increased risks of trafficking, as traffickers often target displaced populations. However, if local and national leaders act quickly to mitigate the trafficking risk by providing displaced persons with accurate and timely information and by taking effective law enforcement action against trafficking, then the community members are likely to be adequately protected from the risk.*³⁴

29 IOM, *IOM Institutional Strategy on Migration and Sustainable Development*, p. 10 (Geneva, 2020). Available from [Institutional Strategy on Migration and Sustainable Development](#).

30 Importantly, risks differ for people who migrate within their territory of citizenship (internal migrants) versus those who cross an international border and enter a country in which they are not a citizen.

31 IOM, *IOM Institutional Strategy on Migration and Sustainable Development*, p. 10 (Geneva, 2020). Available from [Institutional Strategy on Migration and Sustainable Development](#).

32 IOM, *IOM Handbook for Migrants Vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse*, p. 8 (Geneva, 2019). Available from [IOM Handbook for Migrants Vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse](#).

33 **Individual factors** may include, as example, the status in society, physical and biological characteristics, histories and experiences, beliefs and attitudes, physical and mental health and access to resources. **Household and family factors** may refer to, as example, family size, household structure, socioeconomic status, migration histories, employment, livelihoods, education levels, gender discrimination and family dynamics. **Community factors** can include, as example, availability of quality educational opportunities, health care and social services, equal access to resources, livelihood and income-generating opportunities, the natural environment, and social norms and behaviours. **Structural factors** can refer to, as example, histories of colonization and conflict, political systems, migration policies and governance, respect for human rights, and the rule of law.

34 IOM, *IOM Handbook for Migrants Vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse*, p. 8 (Geneva, 2019). Available from [IOM Handbook for Migrants Vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse](#).

The following forms of migration can increase a person's risk of being left behind:

- Internal displacement due to slow and sudden onset of disasters
- Migrating because local land and other resources can no longer support human life
- Forced migration³⁵ due to diverse drivers which can involve force, compulsion or coercion³⁶
- Being trafficked or otherwise coerced into migrating under conditions of exploitation
- Being excluded from basic services due to limitations relating to migration status
- Being excluded from socio-political systems as a result of citizenship status
- Facing discrimination and xenophobia from host communities
- Getting stranded due to cost or other barriers to return
- Losing work during major economic downturns in host societies
- Struggling to reintegrate upon return to one's country of origin or usual residence.

Migration sits within and is shaped by a complex interplay of structural, community, household and individual factors, and can cause heightened risks in people being left behind when:

- Migration governance perpetuate patterns of prejudice, discrimination and exclusion
- Border control measures do not comply with human rights standards
- Fear of deportation restricts engagement with government authorities when needed
- Barriers to legal employment lead to insecure or unsafe working conditions
- Limited access to housing results in poor living conditions as with informal settlements
- Departure results in a loss of property and land ownership that cannot be recovered
- Psychosocial issues arise from complex or sustained stressors during migration
- Migration costs are unduly onerous for e.g. visas, ID documents, or remittances
- Limited language or poor literacy creates barriers to participation
- Lack of familiarity with local systems creates barriers to navigating bureaucracies

The unequal impacts of COVID-19 on migrants

COVID-19 has disrupted the usual daily systems of the world, creating new risks and exacerbating existing inequalities for migrants. The impacts on migrants is complex, ranging from being excluded from treatment of COVID in health care systems, disproportionate loss of work, separation from family, and becoming stranded without basic welfare support. IOM has created a toolkit for practitioners on integrating migration in COVID-19 socio-economic response. Within the toolkit is a *Quick Diagnostic – Leave No one Behind Analysis*, which provides a set of guiding questions for practitioners to identify migrants at risk of being left behind in the course of COVID-19 health and socio-economic responses.³⁷

35 IOM recognizes the status and mandate of the international protection of refugees (International Organization for Migration, *Glossary on Migration*, p. 170-173 (Geneva, 2019). Available from [Glossary on Migration](#)).

36 IOM, *Glossary on Migration*, p. 77 (Geneva, 2019). Available from [Glossary on Migration](#)).

37 IOM, *Integrating Migration into COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response: A Toolkit for Development Partners*, p. 9-10 (Geneva, 2020). Available from [MMICD-Toolkit-Integrating-Migration-COVID-19-Response-August.pdf \(iom.int\)](#).

4.2 In what ways can migration reduce the risk of being left behind?

Efforts to eradicate extreme poverty and inequality can benefit from the consideration of the role migration can play in supporting sustainable development, and create options for disadvantaged groups to be able to access opportunities for human development, including through safe and regular migration pathways. In affirming the 2030 Agenda, governments recognized “the positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development.”³⁸ Indeed, migration can contribute to development outcomes in various ways and at various scales.³⁹ At the individual level, migration can fulfil a person’s aspirations and increase their wellbeing. Countries of origin can benefit at the local (meso) level through the economic, social and human capital contributions of migrants, as seen in the impact of remittances, reduced number of unemployed, and improved skills in returnees. Countries of destination and transit benefit when migrants fill gaps in the labour market, increase consumption, start businesses, and stimulate innovation. At an institutional (macro) level, migration can alleviate demographic pressures, create net fiscal benefit, and introduce societal gains.⁴⁰ The following examples show how migration can decrease a person’s risk of being left behind by contributing to their personal, professional or economic development:

- Avoiding malnutrition as a result of moving to a place with better food supplies
- Avoiding the worst impacts of disasters by moving to a safer location
- Going to school instead of having to work because of a parent’s remittances
- Acquiring a job because the person who was in the job moved away
- Attending boarding school, or otherwise migrating for training or education
- Taking up a work opportunity or promotion that requires relocation
- Learning new skills and being exposed to new ideas in a different society

38 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015). Available from [Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development | Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(un.org\)](#).

39 IOM, *IOM Institutional Strategy on Migration and Sustainable Development*, p. 9 (Geneva, 2020). Available from [Institutional Strategy on Migration and Sustainable Development](#).

40 IOM, *IOM Institutional Strategy on Migration and Sustainable Development*, p. 9 (Geneva, 2020). Available from [Institutional Strategy on Migration and Sustainable Development](#). 9

Who is being left behind in the Pacific?

5

5.1 What are the risks facing the Pacific?

In the past decade, the Pacific has experienced some of the worst-ever disasters, with the region's island states at high- or very high- risk of future disasters, some related to anthropogenic climate change.⁴¹ Meanwhile, one in four Pacific Islanders are living below the national poverty line,⁴² and this is expected to become worse in light of the impact of COVID-19 on key industries in local economies. Within the Pacific, Small Island Developing States are some of the countries furthest behind, with some facing catastrophic threats to survival due to the impacts of a changing climate on the capacity of their territory to support human life. In addition, Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu are classified as Least Developed Countries, while Vanuatu graduated from this status in 2020.⁴³

★ Recommendation 2

Championing support to data collection and disaggregation

The IOM Asia-Pacific Migration Data report , revealed there are data gaps tracking human mobility trends in the Pacific, particularly concerning trafficking in persons. Comprehensive disaggregation by sex, age and form of exploitation is seldom available. IOM will work alongside Pacific national statistic offices, CROP and UN agencies to accelerate data generation, aggregation, disaggregation and analysis on intersectionality in the Pacific to build the evidence base on human rights, vulnerabilities and grounds of discrimination or inclusion of migrant groups in the region. Such work would aim to strengthen local capacities and feed into evidence-based governance decision-making on the LNOB principle in migration policies and programmes.

41 World Risk Index 2019; Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *Biennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report*, p. 30 (2020). Available from [Biennial-Pacific-Sustainable-Development-Report_12112020_FINAL.pdf](#) (forumsec.org).

42 Pacific Islands Forum Countries, *First Quadrennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report*, p. 7 (2018). Available from [1st-Quadrennial-Pacific-Sustainable-Development-Report-2018.pdf](#) (forumsec.org).

43 Least Developed Countries are low-income countries confronting severe structural impediments to sustainable development, as defined by the UN DESA. See UN DESA [Least Developed Countries](#).

44 IOM, *Asia Pacific Regional Data Report*, (2020). Available from [Asia-Pacific Migration Data Report 2020](#) | IOM Publications Platform.

5.2 Who is being left behind in the Pacific, and who is furthest behind?

Throughout the Pacific, women and girls are highly marginalised with the lowest political representation of women in the world, high prevalence of violence against women, low labour force participation rates, and high levels of unpaid or very low paying work in the informal sector.⁴⁵ The Pacific is a region with a very young population, and one in four youth are unemployed resulting in a high incidence of youth poverty.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, people with disabilities are over-represented among the region's poor, are likely to have unmet education, employment and health needs, and struggle to access assistive technology.⁴⁷ Within the Pacific, communities on remote and outer islands experience substantial geographic barriers to accessing the services, goods and protections that sustain life and enable development.⁴⁸

5.3 What circumstances under which migration occurs contribute to the risk of being left behind in the Pacific?

Some forms of migration – without the necessary governance structures and safeguards in place – can cause harms that create or compound disadvantage and these are present in the Pacific. Disasters in the Pacific, including cyclones and volcano eruptions, can force movement of exposed communities who are at risk of harm during their sudden and unplanned relocation. Meanwhile, the changing climate such as rising sea levels are reducing the ability of atoll islands to support human life, resulting in long-term displacement of some people from their traditional lands. Those who relocate to the urban centres on main islands can find themselves excluded from secure housing due to the tightly held customary land tenure system, resulting in the emergence of high-density informal settlements in hazardous locations in which residents are vulnerable to severe weather events and exposed to greater risk of communicable disease. Some people from the Pacific have become victims of trafficking in persons, debt bondage and slave-like practices, and are particularly at risk in settings that lack independent oversight (including workers on fishing vessels and domestic workers), while others are working in informal labour markets which lack equal pay and in unsafe conditions.

Asylum seekers and refugees are exposed to certain risks associated with inadequate protection mechanisms in the region, particularly those who are detained. Some migrants in the region or from the region are detained in immigration detention centers while awaiting deportation. Many Pacific migrants are excluded by host countries from accessing public social welfare support systems, such as health care or the social security safety net. Some, including seasonal workers, have reported experiences of discrimination and other barriers to equal participation. Meanwhile, some who return to their home country in the Pacific struggle with the challenges of reintegration. Finally, the region is experiencing a surge in stranded migrants who cannot return to the place of usual residence due to border closures and the sudden increase in the cost of flights in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

45 Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *Biennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report*, p. 12, 17 (2020). Available from [Biennial-Pacific-Sustainable-Development-Report_12112020_FINAL.pdf](#) (forumsec.org).

46 Pacific Islands Forum Countries, *First Quadrennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report*, p. 7 (2018). Available from [1st-Quadrennial-Pacific-Sustainable-Development-Report-2018.pdf](#) (forumsec.org).

47 Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *Biennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report*, p. 14, 15 (2020). Available from [Biennial-Pacific-Sustainable-Development-Report_12112020_FINAL.pdf](#) (forumsec.org).

48 "In East Asia and Pacific 8.7 percent of the population in rural areas...are multidimensionally poor compared with 2.3 percent in urban areas." UNDP and OPHDI, *Global Multidimensional Poverty Index*, p. 27 (2020). Available from [Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2020](#).

★ Recommendation 3

Identifying migrants who are being left behind

The first step in the UNSDG operational guide for leaving no one behind is to identify those people who are being left behind.⁴⁹ While this policy paper has provided an initial review of the ways migration can expose people to greater risks in the Pacific, a more comprehensive analysis is warranted. To contribute to this work, IOM will ensure migration status is included in relevant data collection tools in the Pacific. IOM in the Pacific can be guided by the *Leave No Migrant Behind* report, which explains how to ensure that monitoring of the SDGs includes data disaggregated by migration status.⁵⁰ This is a foundational technical toolkit and reflects IOM's institutional support and emphasis on the disaggregation of data to ensure inclusiveness for specific population subgroups in sustainable development cooperation. In the Pacific, this will require collaboration with UNESCAP to understand how migration status is included in the datasets feeding the regional Leave No One Behind Database (including in UNICEF's global Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)) and the Pacific Data Hub, and how new items on migration could be included to address any such gaps. This collaboration could also be a vehicle for undertaking an analysis of the existing SDG data in relation to migration, and to explore potential proxy indicators for migration if required.

★ Recommendation 4

Understanding intersectional disadvantage in the context of migration

The second step in the UNSDG operational guide is to identify those who are furthest behind in order to prioritise action for those populations. Key questions include: Which migrants are furthest behind based on the intersection of factors related to discrimination, geography, vulnerability to shocks, socio-economic status or governance? How or in what ways is the lack of regular pathways creating situations of disadvantage or vulnerability for groups of people (including women and girls)? Who has been overlooked? IOM will champion the assessment of intersectionality as a key point for mainstreaming migration in sustainable development and for UN entities joint programming. An example of migration contributing to intersectional disadvantage in the region is the growing number of internal migrants living in informal settlements that are exposed during disasters. Several layers of structural disadvantage converge in this scenario including: difficulties in accessing land due to customary land holding patterns, reduced access to drinking water on remote islands, and a lack of livelihood opportunities. Moreover, it is essential to foster knowledge and understanding of the challenges stemming from structural vulnerability of people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) compounded with their status as migrants⁵¹. A collaborative response to such intersectional disadvantage could be facilitated via the UNSDCF.

49 UN SDG, *Leaving No One Behind: A UNSDG Operational Guide for UN Country Teams* (April 2019). Available from [LNOB Operational Guide \(Interim Draft\)](#).

50 IOM, *Leave No Migrant Behind: The 2030 Agenda and Data Disaggregation* (Geneva, 2021). Available from [Leave No Migrant Behind: The 2030 Agenda and Data Disaggregation](#) | IOM Publications Platform.

51 IOM, *International Standards on the Protection of People with diverse SOGIESC in the context of Migration* (May 2021). Available from <https://www.iom.int/tags-2021/reducing-global-inequalities?page=3>.

Operationalizing LNOB to address inequality in the Pacific

6

“IOM’s approach is to maximize the potential of migration to achieve sustainable development outcomes for migrants and societies alike.”⁵²

6.1 Tackling inequality in the Pacific

The third step of the UNSDG guidelines for operationalising the leave no one behind principle is to identify what should be done, and who should do it. As elaborated in the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development, the member countries of the Pacific Islands Forum have committed to the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including the principle to leave no one behind.⁵³ There is clear agreement on regional priorities, as well as the preferred processes for implementation and reporting.⁵⁴ As of late 2021, there were two regional reports and 13 country-level reports assessing progress towards the 2030 Agenda.⁵⁵

★ Recommendation 5

Identifying and tackling structural inequalities in migration

The 2030 Agenda relies on a transformative approach that breaks the cycles of inequality and disadvantage that leave people behind. In the UNSDG operational guide, this step requires analysing the causes of disadvantage by analysing root causes, role patterns and a capacity gaps. In addition to identifying particular groups of people who are at risk as a result of their migration status, IOM will also support the knowledge enhancement of governments and civil society on the ways migration processes and policies can create, reinforce or transform structural inequalities. What structural inequalities force people to move? What types of discrimination are experienced during migration journeys? In what ways do migration systems and policies reinforce or extend systemic disadvantage? Who wants to move, and are they able to move? Answering these questions will enable decision-makers and practitioners to tackle discriminatory aspects of migration policy in the region.

⁵² International Organisation for Migration, *IOM Institutional Strategy on Migration and Sustainable Development* (Geneva, 2020). Available from [Institutional Strategy on Migration and Sustainable Development](#).

⁵³ Pacific SDGs Taskforce, *Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development* (Fiji, 2018). Available from [Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development](#).

⁵⁴ Pacific SDGs Taskforce, *Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development* (Fiji, 2018). Available from [Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development](#); Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *Framework for Pacific Regionalism* (Fiji, 2016). Available from [Framework for Pacific Regionalism](#); Pacific Island Forum, *Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration*, 30 August 2012. Available from [Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration](#); UN OHRLS, *The Samoa Pathway* (n.d.). Available from [SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action \(SAMOA Pathway\)](#).

⁵⁵ Regional reports: Pacific Islands Forum Countries, *First Quadrennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report* (2018). Available from [1st-Quadrennial-Pacific-Sustainable-Development-Report-2018.pdf \(forumsec.org\)](#); Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *Biennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report* (2020). Available from [Biennial-Pacific-Sustainable-Development-Report_12112020_FINAL.pdf \(forumsec.org\)](#).

Country reports: Nine countries have completed Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) and four countries have reported to the 2020 High Level Political Forum (HLPF).

6.2 Reducing the impact of displacement in the Pacific

Vulnerability to shocks and fragility is one of the five domains that contribute to people being left behind.⁵⁶ As described in section 5.1, the Pacific experiences some of the most severe disasters. Internal displacement due to slow and sudden onset of disasters is a significant cause of disadvantage in the Pacific, with over 50,000 people thus displaced each year. While some communities are able to safely return home soon after a disaster strikes, others are displaced for long periods, or return to an area that continues to be exposed to future hazards.⁵⁷

★ Recommendation 6

Enhancing resilience to climate change and disaster displacement

To address the risk, IOM and partners will continue to support people to remain resilient to climate change and disaster displacement. This should include identifying and responding to those individuals and groups who are experiencing intersectional risks to ensure the most vulnerable are not pushed further behind. To do this, IOM – alongside civil society and community practitioners in line with the localization agenda – should advocate for populations at risk in the Pacific – such as women and girls – and ensure the support provided (such as planned relocation) do not inadvertently expose these people to additional harms. Such intersectional risk requires an intersectional UN response that draws on the knowledge, tools and resources of the range of CROP and UN agencies.

6.3 The contribution of migration to development in the Pacific

In the Pacific, migration is a crucial pathway for accessing opportunities for human and economic development. Migration is often undertaken to access employment opportunities, whether within a country, within the region, or in another country. Seasonal employment fluctuates in the Pacific, reflecting e.g. increased demand for hospitality staff during the peak tourist season. Seasonal worker schemes are operated by Australia and New Zealand that employ significant numbers of migrants from certain Pacific countries, and these programmes are growing, however with low participation of women.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, dual citizenship, free movement zones, and bilateral agreements enable migrants to access new opportunities. Remittances from migrants are not only a source of income for families, but together account for a high proportion of national income for several countries in the region. As a final example, as many remote island communities do not operate secondary schools, young people from these areas must move to access secondary or tertiary education.

★ Recommendation 7

Leveraging migration for development

Migration is a valuable tool in the development toolbox, as it can enable people who are being left behind to access development opportunities. In the Pacific, it can also be associated with climate change related human mobility, disaster displacement and human trafficking. Through new collaborative efforts under the UNSDCF, migration programmes will seek to deepen the understanding of the contributions migration makes to social and economic development of the region, and strengthen the mainstreaming of migration in sustainable development initiatives. Further, governments should explore efforts to expand safe, regular and orderly migration opportunities as a development activity.

56 UN SDG, *Leaving No One Behind: A UNSDG Operational Guide for UN Country Teams* (April 2019). Available from [LNOB Operational Guide \(Interim Draft\)](#).

57 Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Pacific Response to Disaster Displacement* (n.d.) Available from [Pacific Response to Disaster Displacement Project](#).

58 ESCAP et al, *Asia Pacific Migration Report*, chapter 1 (Bangkok, 2021). Available from [Asia Pacific Migration Report 2020: Assessing Implementation of the Global Compact](#).

★ Recommendation 8

IOM as a development actor

At a global level, IOM is an important development actor, coordinating the UN Network on Migration and contributing as an active member of the UN Sustainable Development Group. However, the work of IOM has often been structured through short term funding cycles and humanitarian emergency interventions. However, as a region the Pacific is not experiencing protracted crises. Instead, it is engaged in the long-term resilience building punctuated by substantial but intermittent setbacks caused by disasters. To ensure sustained efforts to leverage migration to leave no one behind, IOM should seek multi-year funding and joint programming with CROP and UN entities to integrate responses to structural inequalities in long-term resilience building and sustainable development.

★ Recommendation 9

Enhancing the role of migrants as agents of development

Migrants are key actors for development in the Pacific. Migration enables people in the Pacific to access education or employment opportunities that expand their knowledge or capabilities. Meanwhile, remittances sustain families, local communities and contribute to national incomes. IOM has a key role to play in ensuring migrants – individuals as well as diaspora communities – are enabled to contribute to development outcomes. The role of the Pacific diaspora in providing humanitarian relief – in the form of cash transfers and remittances – to their communities of origin facing disasters has been highlighted in recent years and should be further enabled. This can include working to expand access to ‘mobile money’ and other financial technology that reduce the costs associated with remittances and promote efficiency of transfers particularly in the case of urgent relief in the wake of a disaster to reach those most vulnerable. Creating programs or incentives for upskilled migrants to engage in return or circular migration that is undertaken for a development purpose (such as to work in an under-resourced sector) would also further maximize the potential for migrants themselves to contribute to processes of sustainable development.

★ Recommendation 10

Contributing to humanitarian-development-peace nexus collaboration

Addressing the needs of the most vulnerable migrants in emergency and development contexts, throughout every phase of the human mobility cycle requires due consideration of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach. This is in line with the priorities of Pacific leaders outlined through the Boe Declaration which calls for an expanded concept of security inclusive of human security, humanitarian assistance and resilience to climate change and disasters. The UNSDCF should advance the operationalization of development approaches that address crisis drivers and recurrent risks by drawing out lessons learned and best practices in the implementation of such programmes in the Pacific. IOM is well placed to further bridge the gap between humanitarian assistance and development programming through the pursuit of thematic areas like disaster risk reduction (DRR) that are highly relevant to the Pacific. IOM will seek to develop new joint programming initiatives with UN partners under the UNSDCF to further strengthen this contribution.

★ Recommendation 11

Streamlining data and reporting for improved migration governance

As part of their efforts to achieve the SDGs, UN Member States in the Pacific have committed to increase investment in the collection and use of timely and accurate disaggregated data. IOM can support this commitment by overlaying migration on to existing data collection, analysis and reporting mechanisms whenever possible. As a priority, IOM will work to ensure questions relevant to migration are incorporated in existing data collection efforts. Further, it will support countries in the Pacific to use the data sets and analytical tools relating to the SDGs to report on other global initiatives, such as the Global Compact on Migration implementation review. Such work will aim to lay the foundations for enhancing migration management and governance initiatives that are tailored to those identified as being left behind and those furthest behind. IOM will use tools, such as the Migration Governance Index, to support governments in identifying key priorities at the legislative, policy and institutional level, and leverage its technical capacity and expertise to promote integrated, well-evidenced policy planning frameworks and strengthen regional, national and local coordination mechanisms on migration and sustainable development.

Leaving No one Behind in the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent

Migration is an inherent aspect of human life and a fundamental component of the history and development of all countries in the Pacific. In this regard, the formulation of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent identifies education, labour mobility, and remittances as well as climate change and natural disasters and health threats as part of the 20 key drivers of change. In supporting the CROP Agencies in the implementation of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, IOM in the Pacific will make a substantive contribution to efforts to leave no one behind by leaning into its reputation for facilitating migration dialogue and expand the scope of these conversations to the transformative possibilities of 'blue sky' thinking. What role does migration play in the identity of the peoples of the Blue Pacific? In what ways can human movement contribute to development outcomes in the region? Do existing border controls and migration policies best support the development of the region and its member states? What efficiencies can be gained by greater collaboration or shared approaches? In order to answer these questions, IOM will support constructive dialogue at the regional level exploring the impact of migration on efforts to leave no one behind and other rights-based global commitments by countries in the region.

Conclusion

This policy paper has provided a brief introduction to the 2030 Agenda's call to Leave No One Behind and the impact of migration on fulfilling this commitment.

The SDGs, and the commitment to leave no one behind, and to reach the furthest behind, will not be achieved without due consideration of migration. It has explored the role of migration both as an important factor for contributing to positive sustainable development outcomes, and in relation to how people are being left behind in certain migration contexts. The concept of intersectional disadvantage was highlighted as an instrumental tool for identifying and working with those who are furthest behind. Throughout, the paper highlighted opportunities for IOM to operationalize the leave no one behind principle by expanding efforts to tackle disadvantage and maximising the potential for migration to leave no one behind in the Pacific.





Aerial view of Taveuni's coastline, Fiji
(Tom Vierus / Pacific Media House).



